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(54) **SEMICONDUCTOR-ON-INSULATOR(SOI) STRUCTURES INCLUDING GRADIENT NITRIDED BURIED OXIDE (BOX)**

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H01L 21/31 (2006.01)
H01L 29/76 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **438/769**; 438/199; 438/770; 438/775; 438/795; 257/288; 257/348; 257/369; 257/371; 257/632; 257/E21.194; 257/E21.268; 257/E21.415; 257/E27.103; 257/E27.112

(58) **Field of Classification Search** 438/199, 438/769, 770, 775, 795; 257/288, 348, 369, 257/371, 632, E21.194, E21.268, E21.415, 257/E27.103, E27.112

See application file for complete search history.

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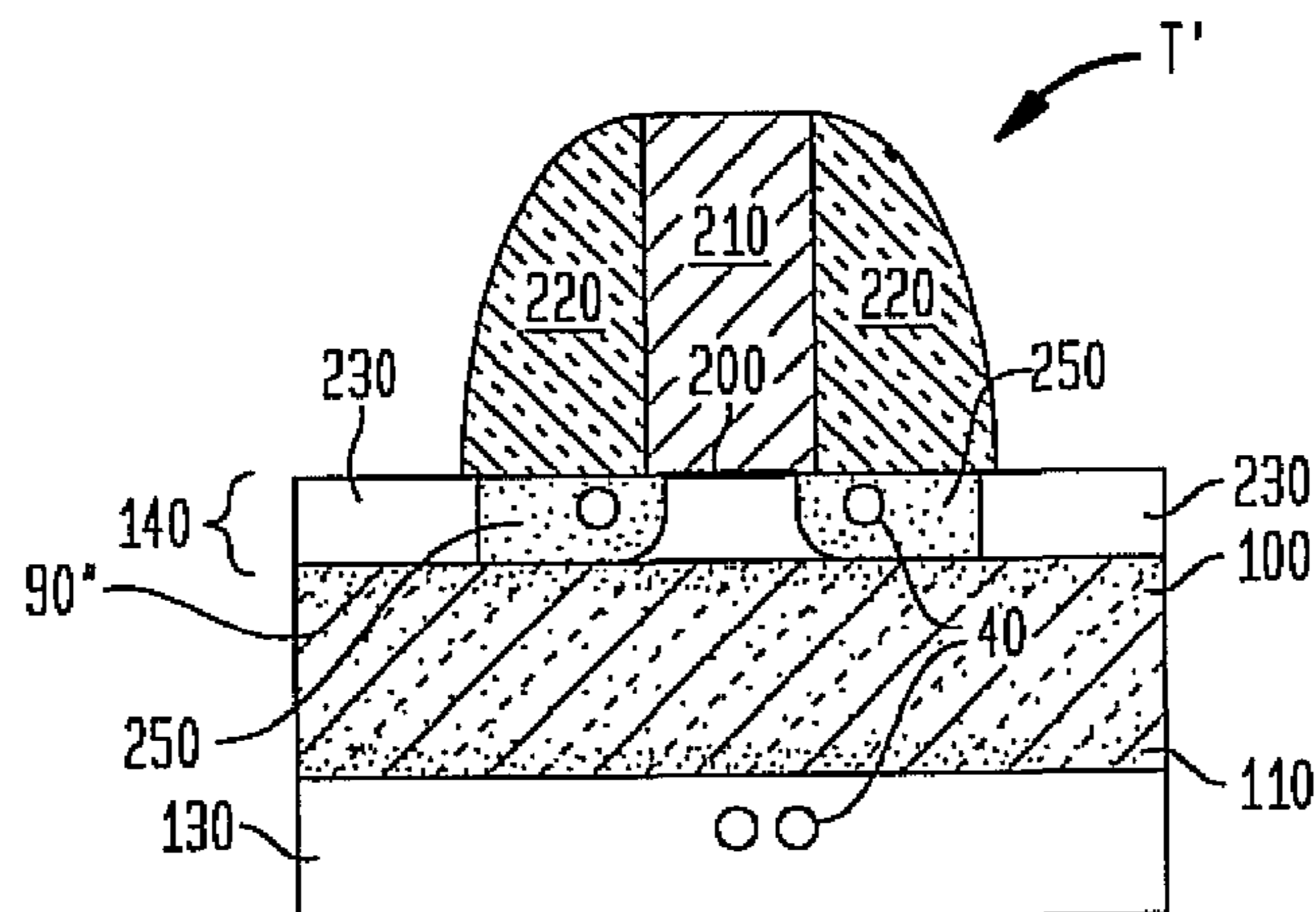
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A semiconductor-on-insulator structure includes a buried dielectric layer interposed between a base semiconductor substrate and a surface semiconductor layer. The buried dielectric layer comprises an oxide material that includes a nitrogen gradient that peaks at the interface of the buried dielectric layer with at least one of the base semiconductor substrate and surface semiconductor layer. The interface of the buried dielectric layer with the at least one of the base semiconductor substrate and surface semiconductor layer is abrupt, providing a transition in less than about 5 atomic layer thickness, and having less than about 10 angstroms RMS interfacial roughness. A second dielectric layer comprising an oxide dielectric material absent nitrogen may be located interposed between the buried dielectric layer and the surface semiconductor layer.

17 Claims, 4 Drawing Sheets



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FIG. 1

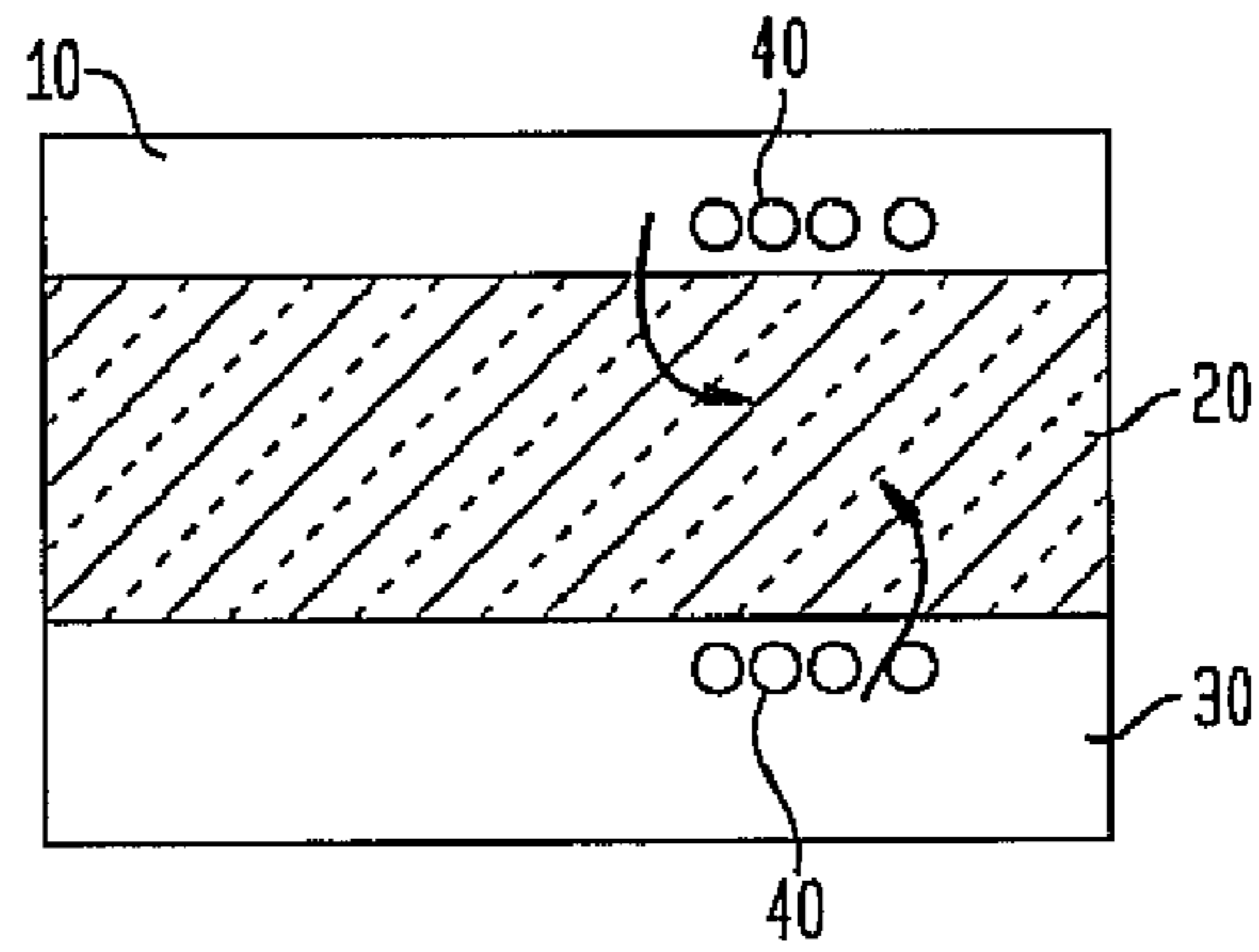


FIG. 2

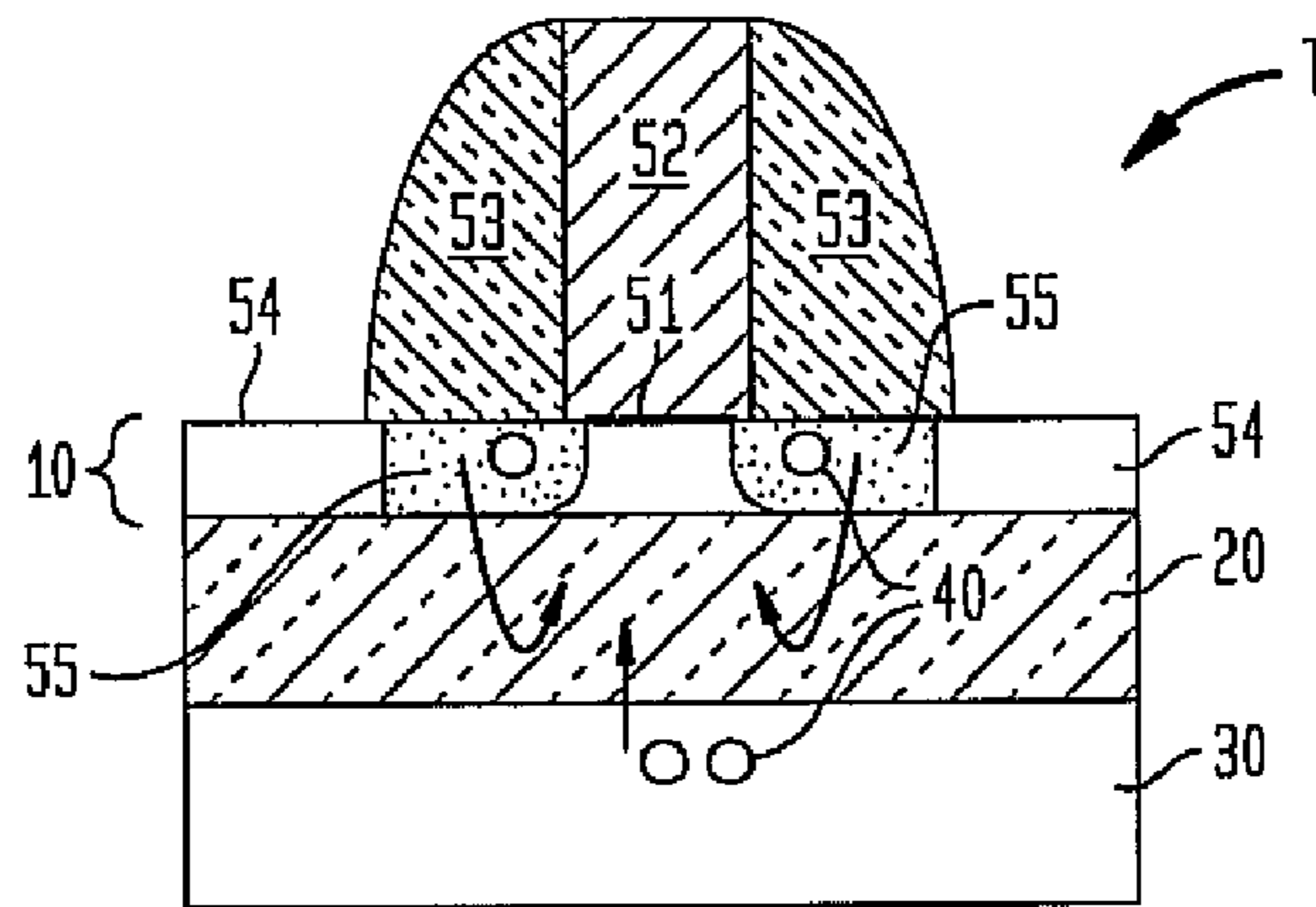


FIG. 3

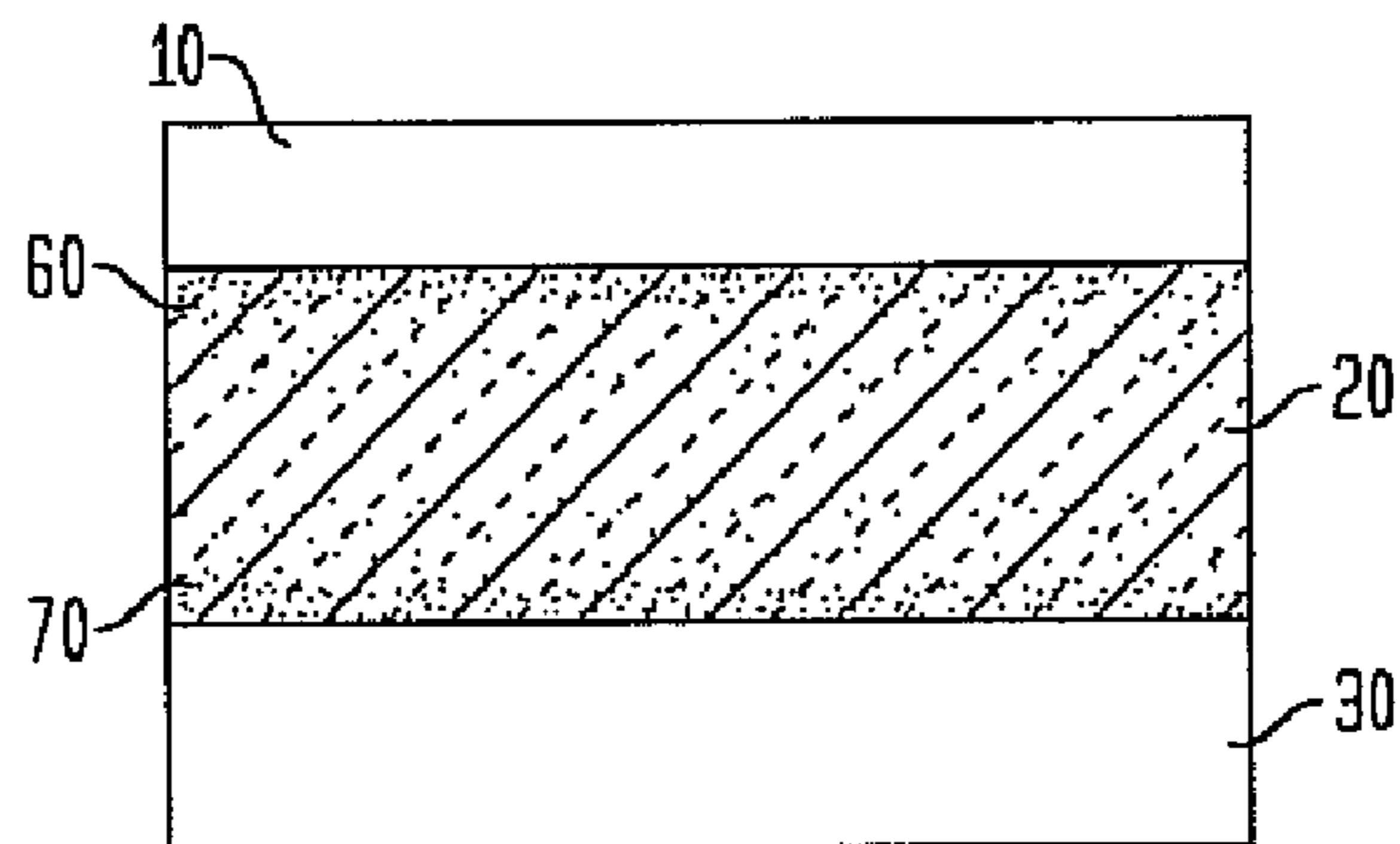


FIG. 4A

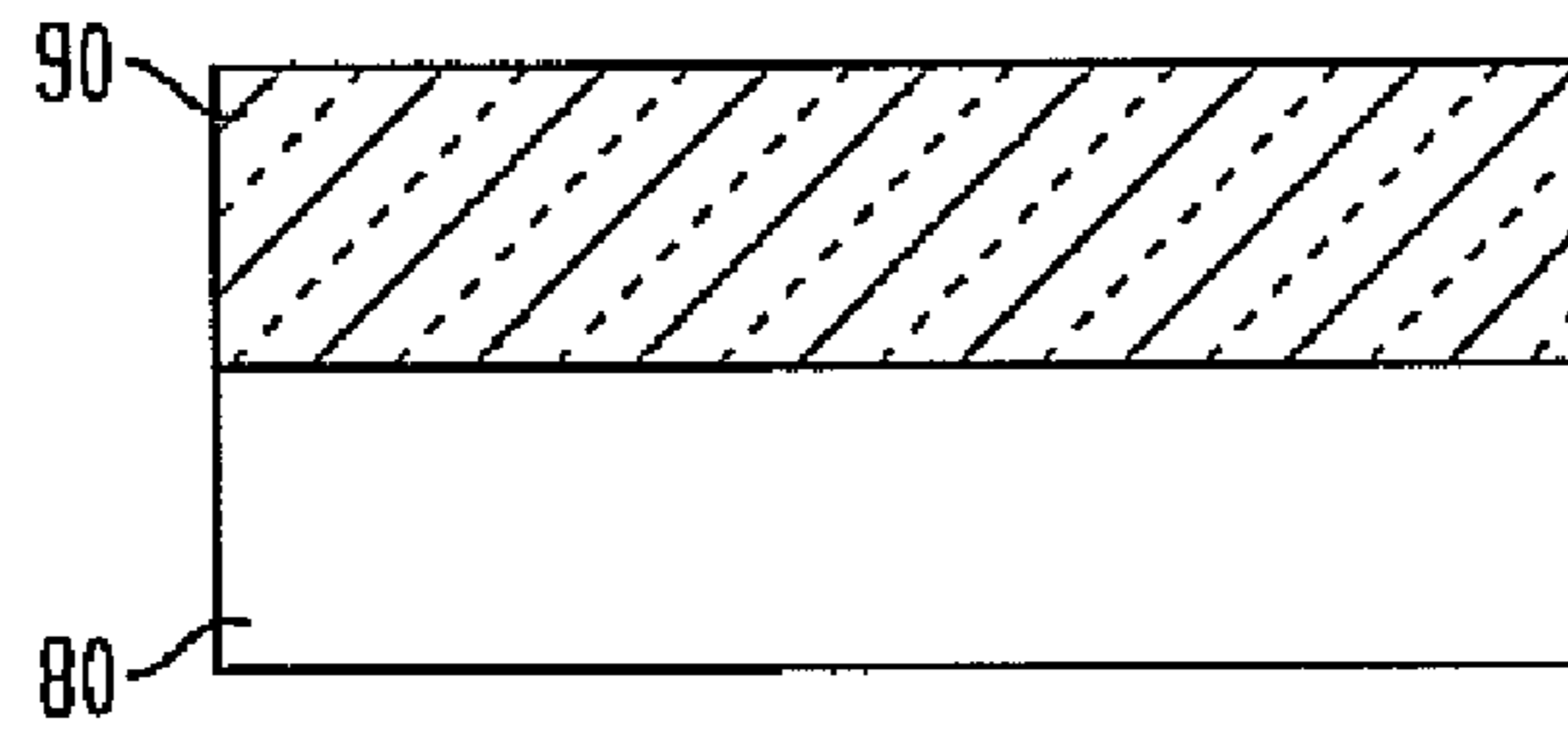


FIG. 4B

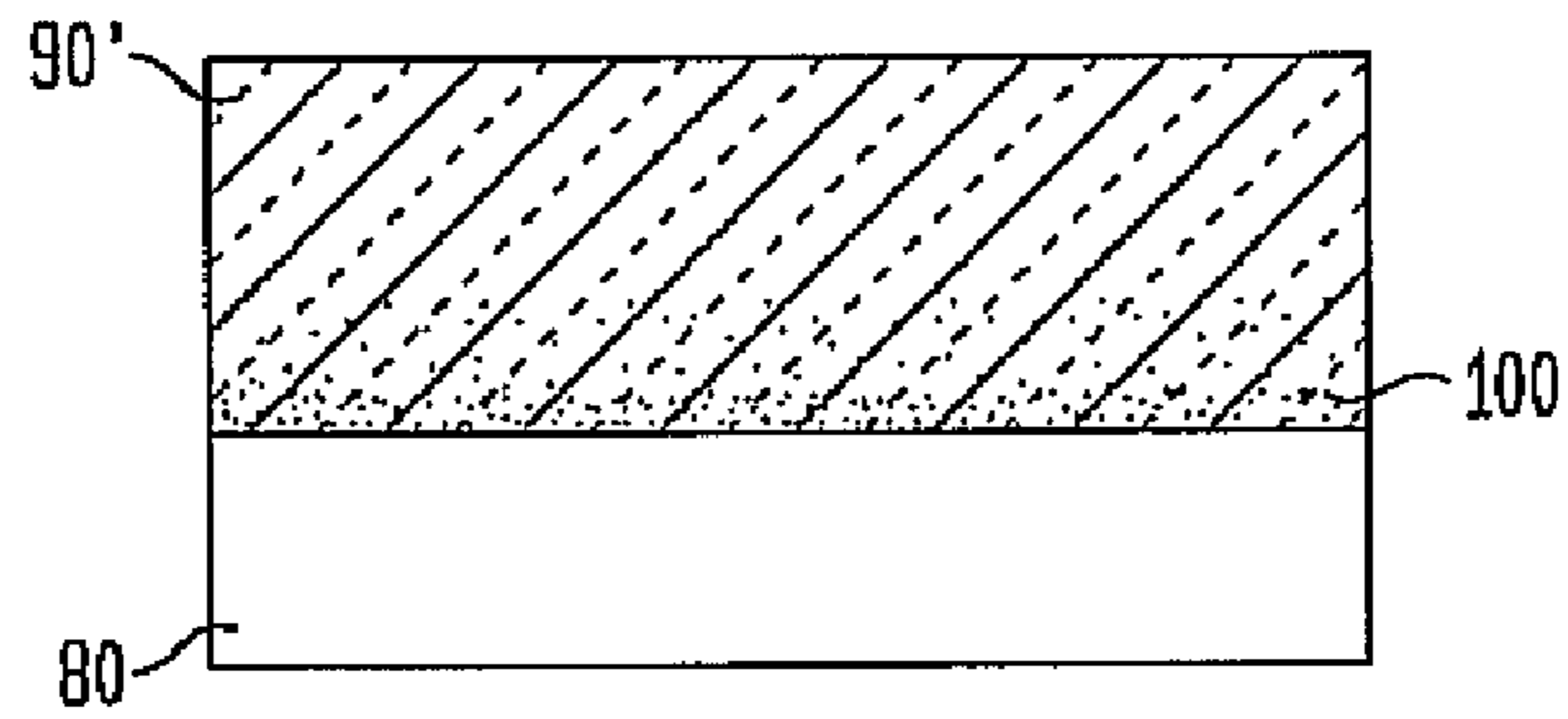


FIG. 4C

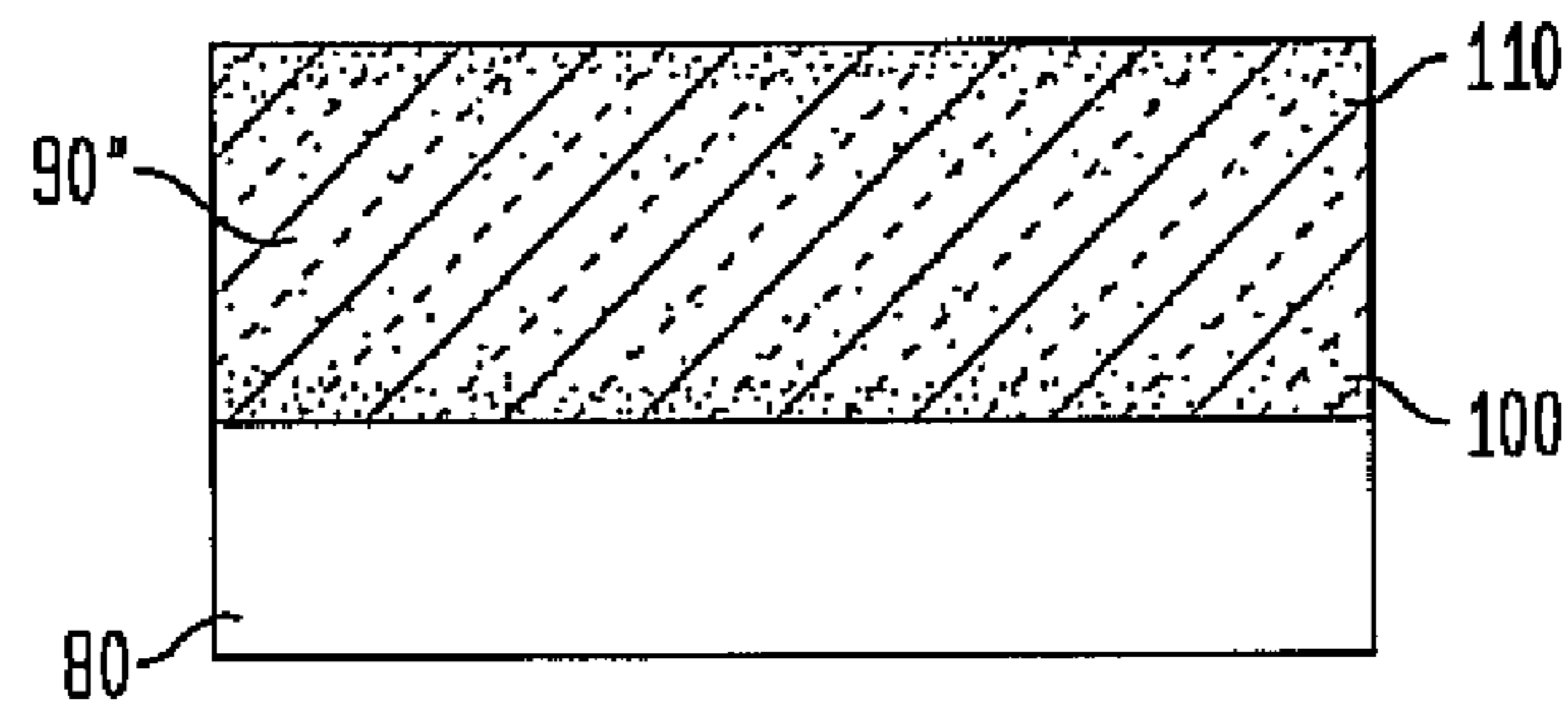


FIG. 4D

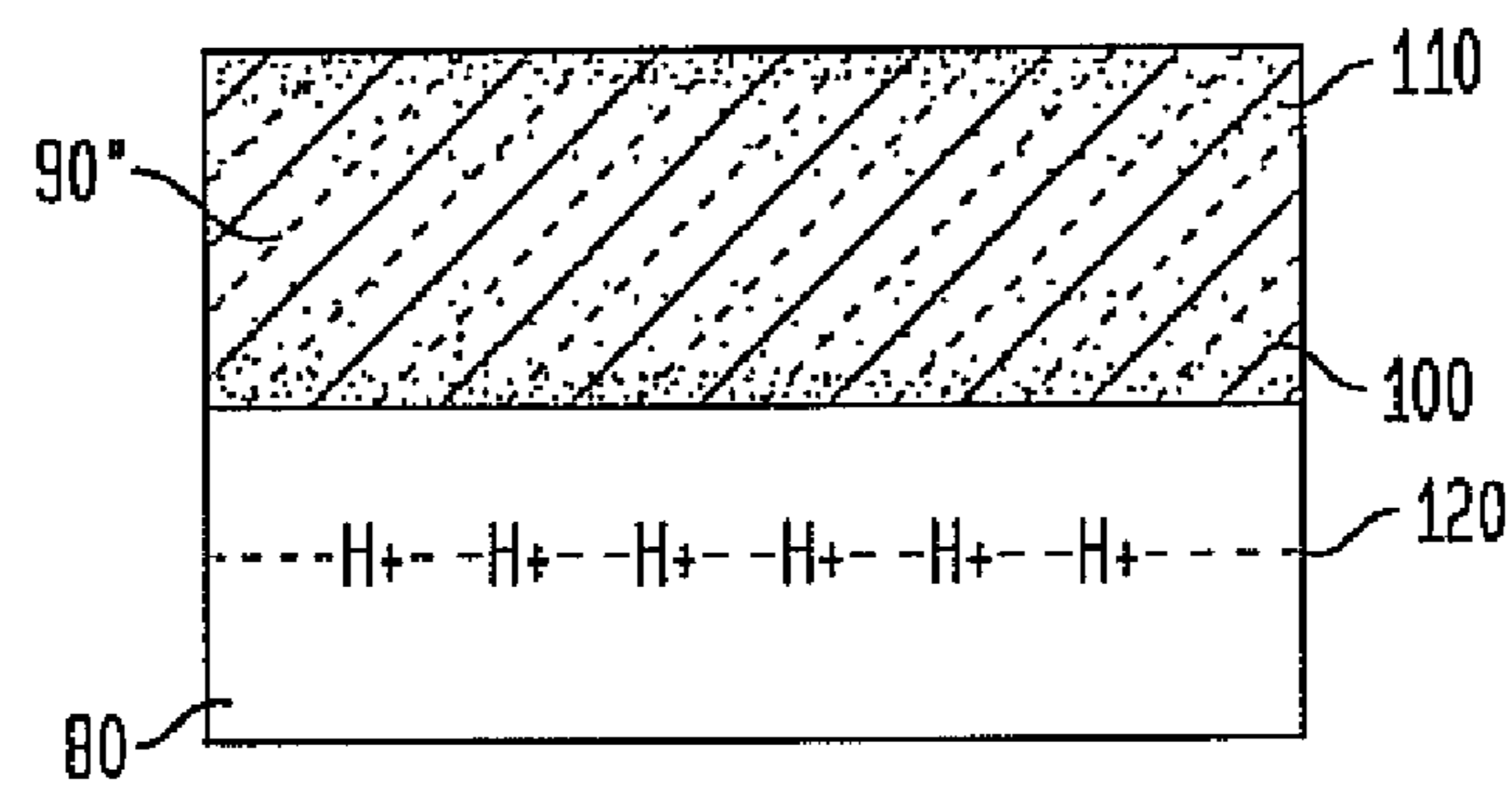


FIG. 4E

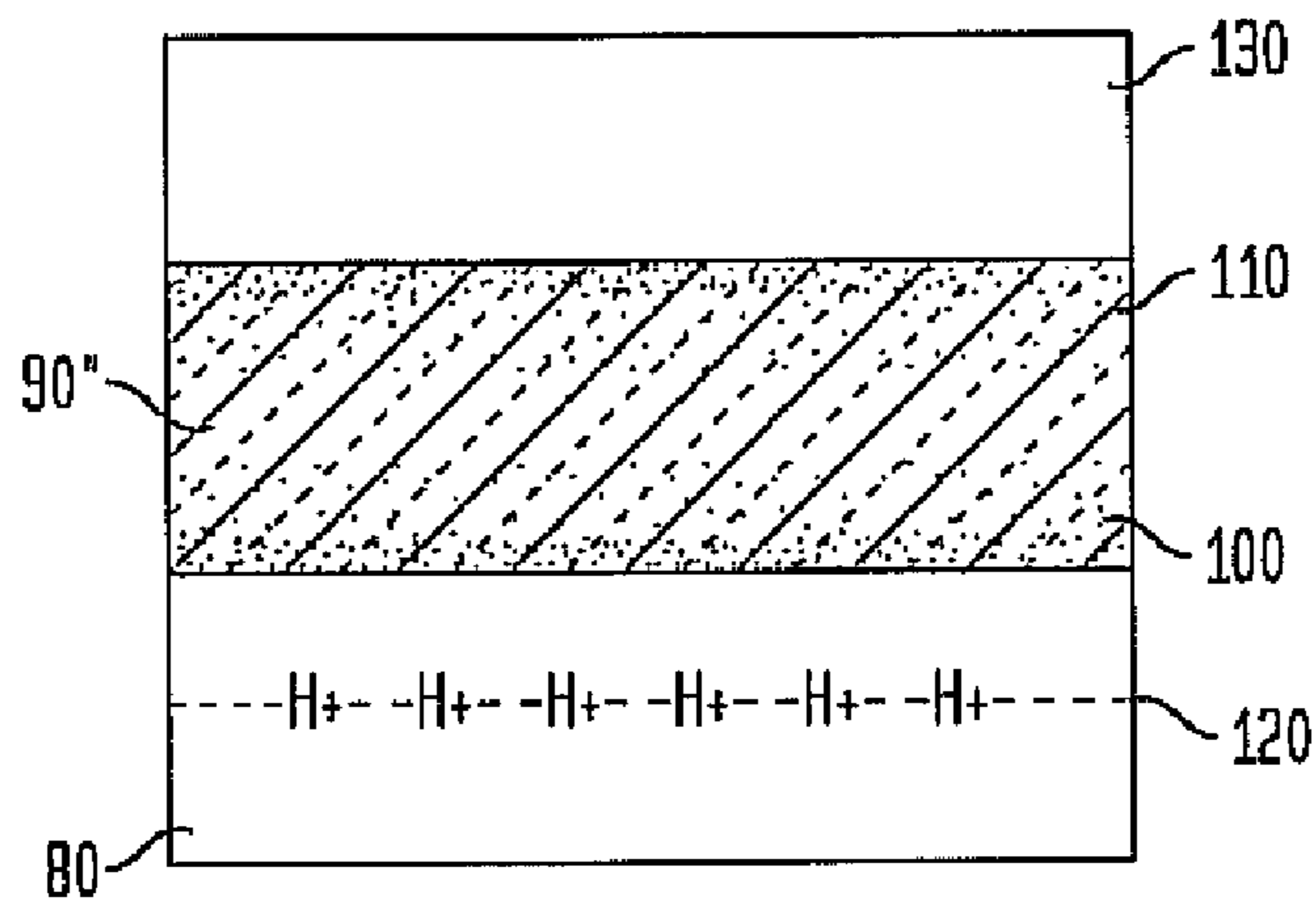


FIG. 4F

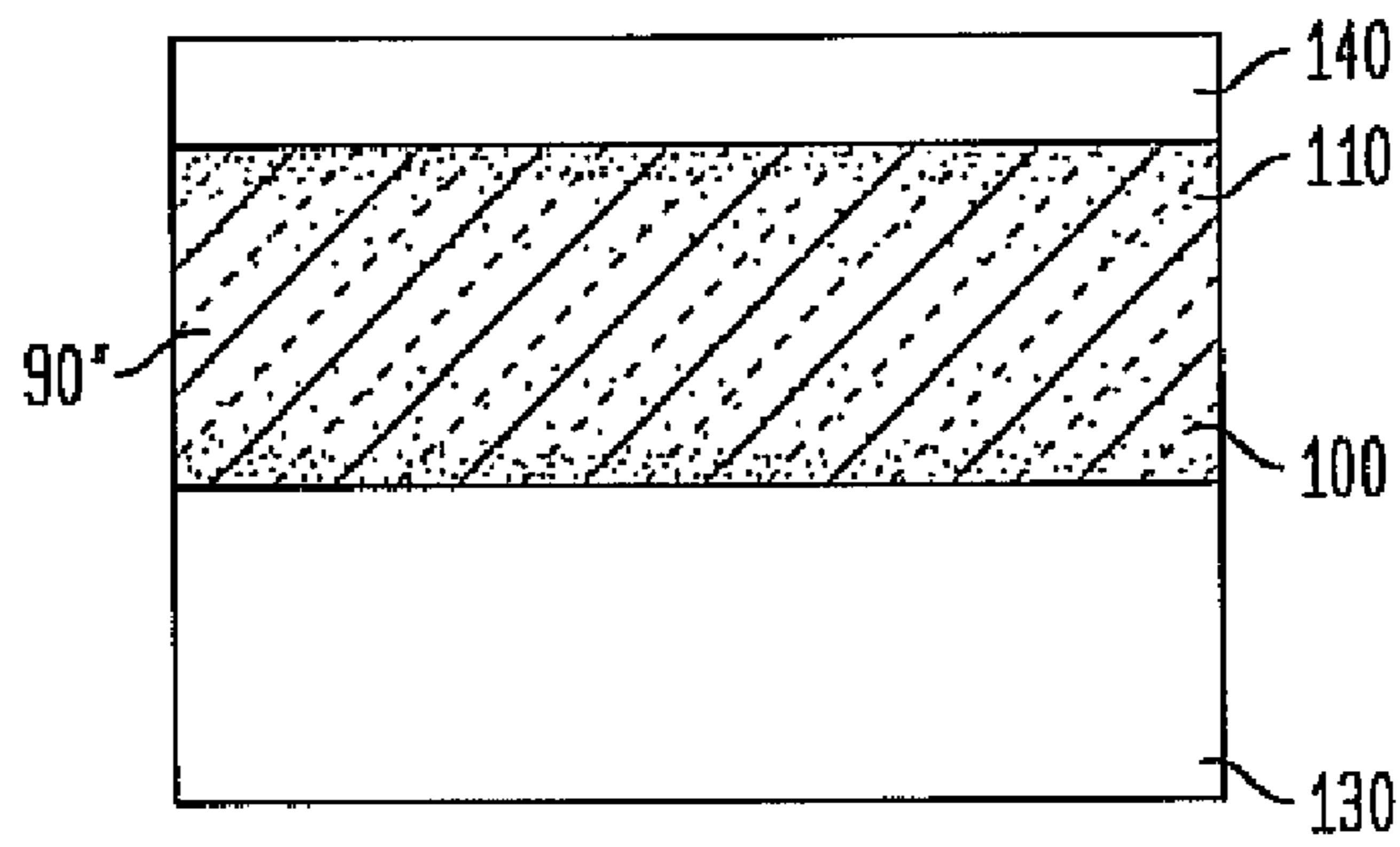


FIG. 5A

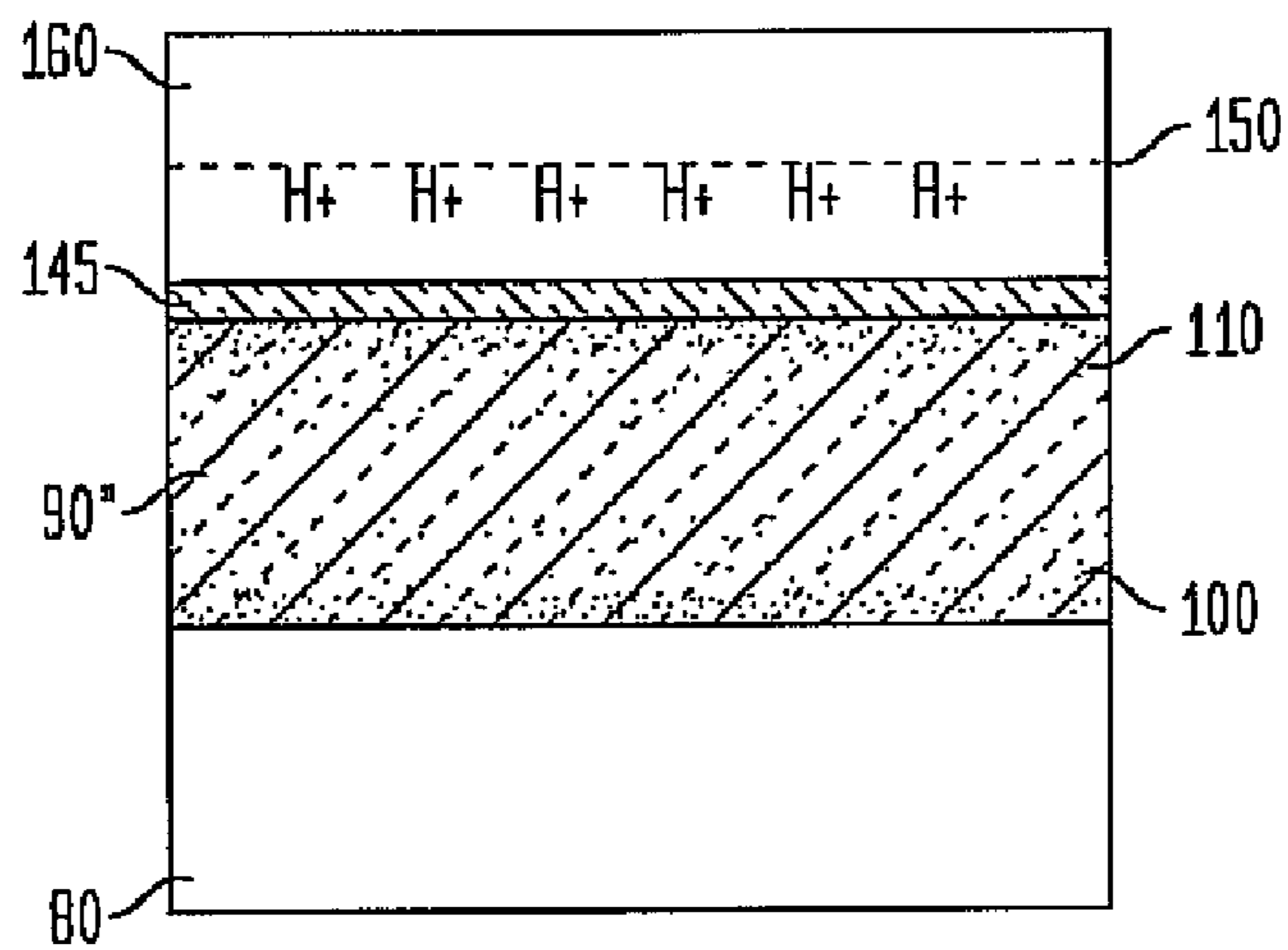


FIG. 5B

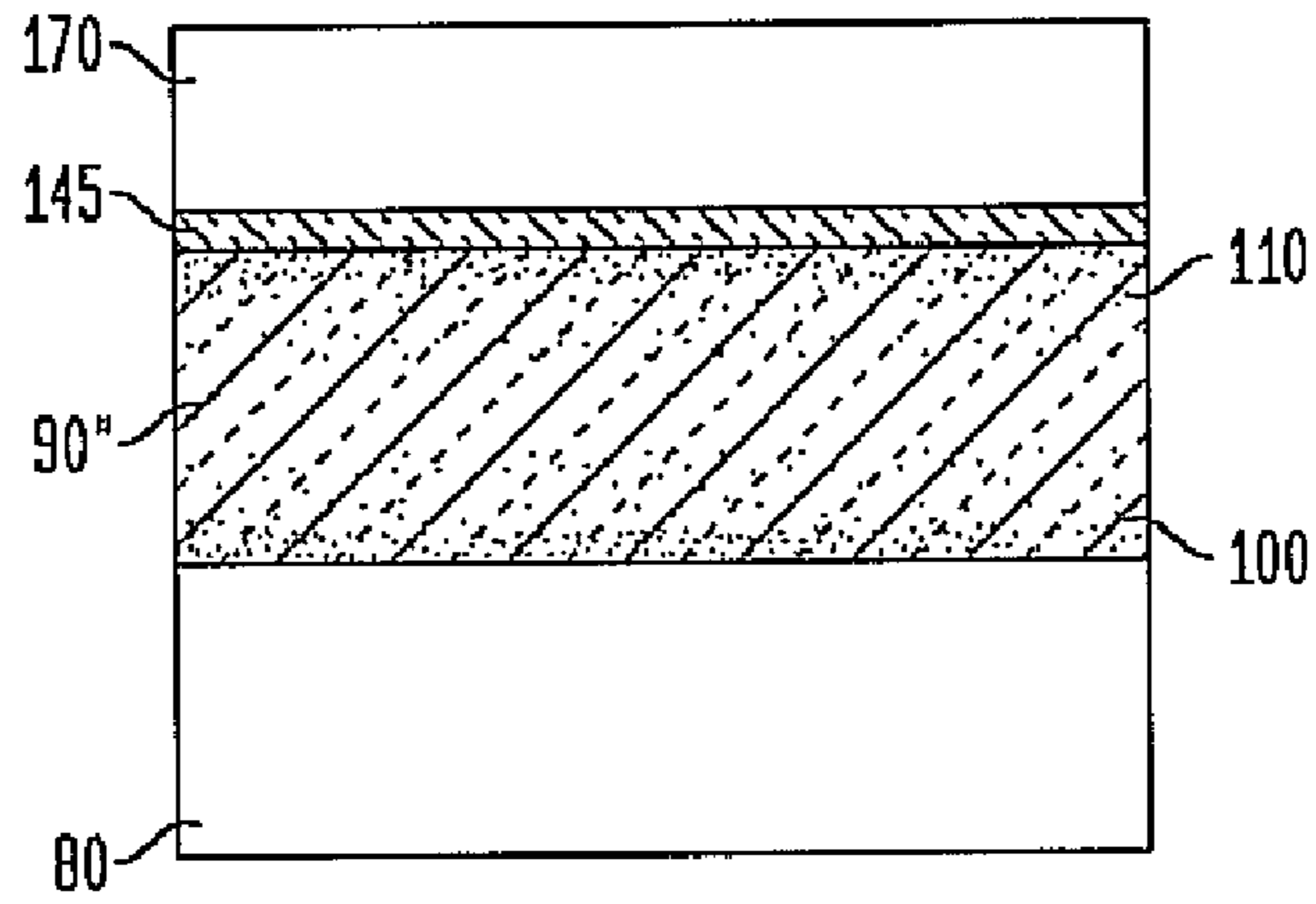


FIG. 6

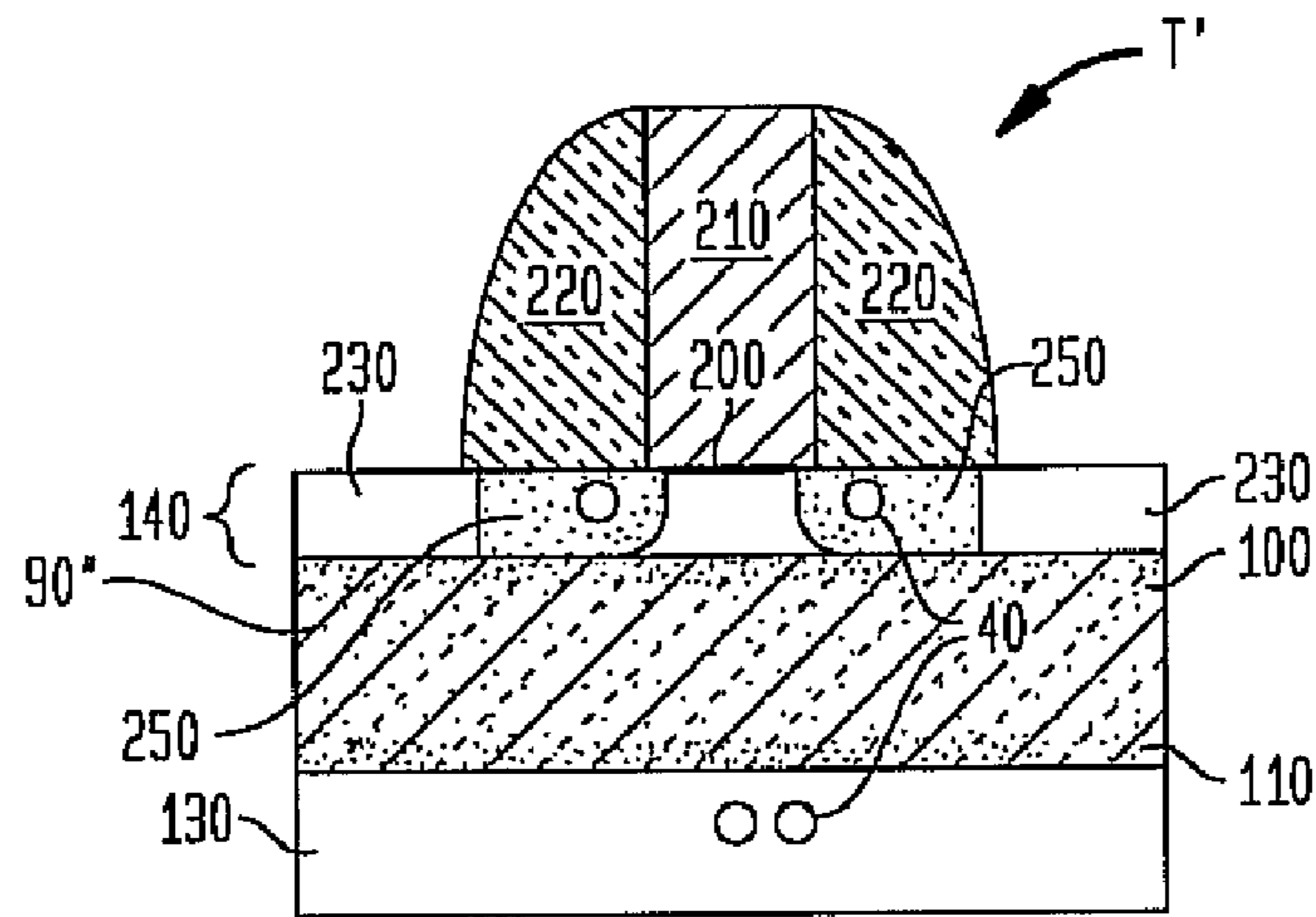
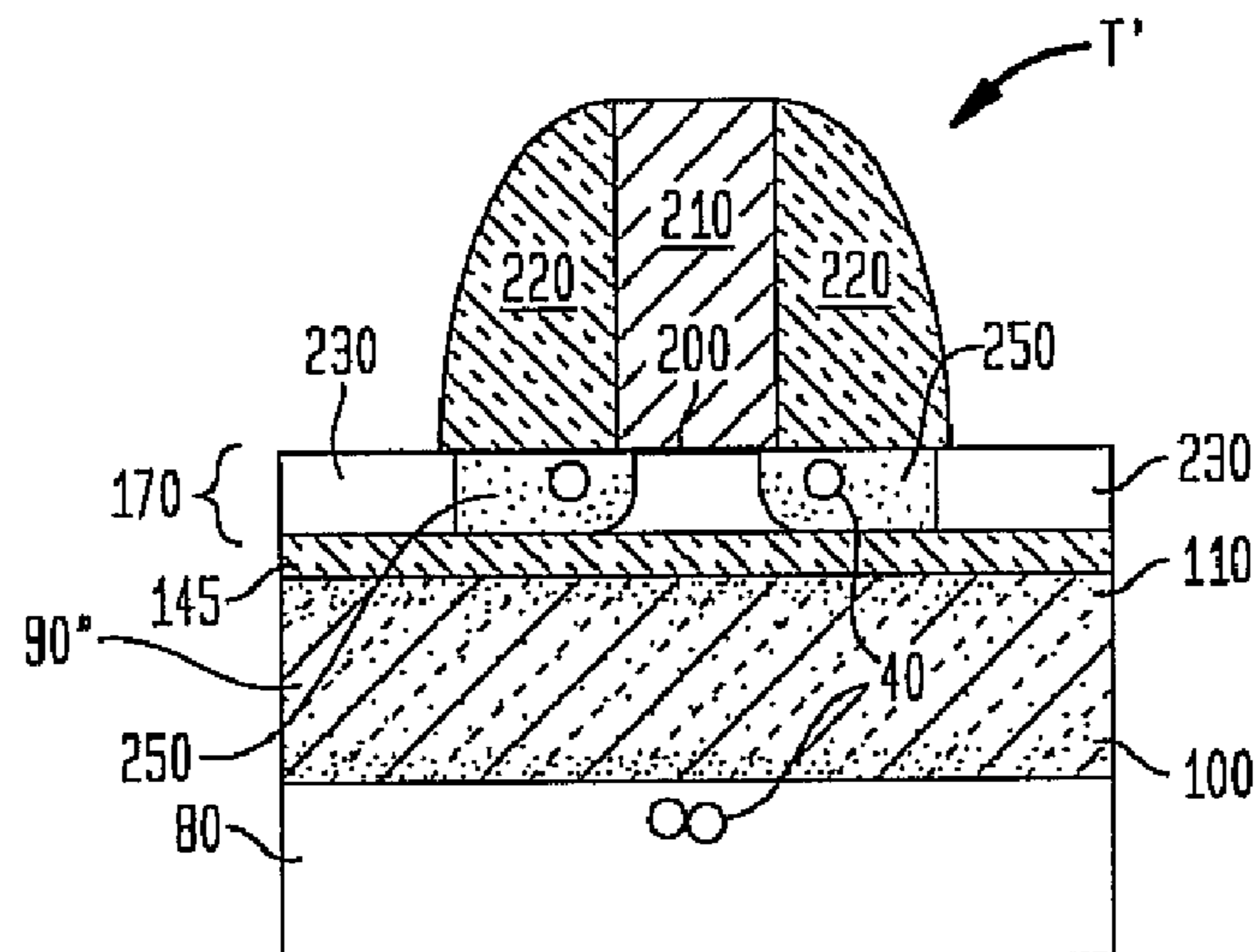


FIG. 7



**SEMICONDUCTOR-ON-INSULATOR(SOI)
STRUCTURES INCLUDING GRADIENT
NITRIDED BURIED OXIDE (BOX)**

RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation of U.S. Ser. No. 11/483,901, filed Jul. 10, 2006.

BACKGROUND

1. Field of the Invention

The invention relates to semiconductor devices, and more specifically to semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structures and methods for fabrication thereof to improve metal oxide semiconductor field effect transistor (MOSFET) performance in complementary metal oxide semiconductor (CMOS) devices.

2. Description of the Related Art

The migration and segregation of mobile dopants, such as boron, to oxide materials is a well known phenomenon in semiconductor structures. For example, the migration and segregation of boron to oxide isolation regions may cause narrow width effects in semiconductor channels which in turn may impact a semiconductor device threshold voltage. Within the context of devices fabricated within semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structures, the impact of boron migration and segregation may be even more severe since there is typically also a buried oxide interface located below a semiconductor device. In ultra-thin SOI (UTSOI) devices, the boron migration and segregation effect may become even more extreme since an oxide interface typically abuts a boron doped extension region.

A massive loss of boron into an underlying buried oxide (BOX) layer may lead to a high parasitic resistance and a compromised semiconductor device performance. Loss of boron from a substrate into a buried oxide (BOX) layer can also affect operation of devices in which substrate doping is used as a back gate, or where substrate doping is used to set a threshold voltage as in the case of fully-depleted devices with a thin buried oxide (BOX) layer.

A potential solution to boron migration might be the use of a laser or flash anneal process for boron activation, but this solution severely restricts the process flow, and requires that a boron dopant in a semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure never be exposed to a conventional spike anneal once the boron dopant is in place. This solution may lead to increased complexity in device integration, and to added constraints in device design.

Novel buried oxide (BOX) layer structures that may be used within semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structures are disclosed in the semiconductor fabrication art.

For example, Hsu, in U.S. Pat. No. 5,468,657, teaches a method for nitridation of a buried oxide (BOX) layer within a semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure formed using a separation by implantation of oxygen (SIMOX) method. The nitridation method uses nitrogen implantation to the same depth to which oxygen is implanted during the separation by implantation of oxygen (SIMOX) method.

In general, one of the drawbacks of the SIMOX process is a high back-interface charge at the oxide/Si interface. The presence of back interface charge can lead to mobility degradation (and hence reduced drive current) in the channel of CMOS transistors fabricated on SIMOX substrates. The degradation is especially severe in CMOS devices fabricated on

SIMOX substrates where the active Si layer is thin (<20 nm) as is the case for fully-depleted CMOS fabricated on ultra-thin SOI.

Semiconductor structures are certain to continue to increase in density and decrease in dimension. As a result of these density and dimensional trends, desirable are additional semiconductor structures and methods for fabrication thereof that impede boron or other mobile dopant migration and segregation to an oxide material, such as a buried oxide (BOX) material.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention includes semiconductor structures and methods for fabricating the semiconductor structures. The semiconductor structures selectively incorporate nitrogen into a buried oxide (BOX) layer of a semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure. The methods may be used to tailor the location and concentration profile of the nitrogen in the buried oxide (BOX) layer to block the migration and segregation of boron or other mobile dopants from either an adjoining surface semiconductor layer or an adjoining base semiconductor substrate into the buried oxide (BOX) layer.

A semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure in accordance with the invention includes a buried dielectric layer located interposed between a base semiconductor substrate and a surface semiconductor layer. The buried dielectric layer includes an oxide material having a nitrogen gradient therein that increases at an interface of the buried dielectric layer with at least one of the base semiconductor substrate and the surface semiconductor layer. The buried dielectric layer has an abrupt interface with the at least one of the base semiconductor substrate and surface semiconductor layer that transitions to the at least one of the base semiconductor substrate and the surface semiconductor layer in less than about five atomic layers. Such an abrupt interface is characteristic of an interface formed by direct wafer bonding.

Another semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure in accordance with the invention also includes a buried dielectric layer located interposed between a base semiconductor substrate and a surface semiconductor layer. The buried dielectric layer also includes an oxide material having a nitrogen gradient therein that increases at an interface of the buried dielectric layer with at least one of the base semiconductor substrate and the surface semiconductor layer. The buried dielectric layer has an interfacial roughness with the at least one of the base semiconductor substrate and surface semiconductor layer of less than about 10 angstroms RMS.

Yet another semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure in accordance with the invention also includes a buried dielectric layer located interposed between a base semiconductor substrate and a surface semiconductor layer. The buried dielectric layer also includes an oxide material having a nitrogen gradient therein. The semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure also includes a second dielectric layer located interposed between the buried dielectric layer and the surface semiconductor layer. The second dielectric layer comprises an oxide dielectric material absent nitrogen.

A method for fabricating a semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure in accordance with the invention includes nitriding, while using a thermal nitriding method, an oxide layer located upon a base semiconductor substrate to provide a nitrided oxide layer having a first nitrogen gradient that peaks at an interface of the nitrided oxide layer with the base semiconductor substrate. The method also includes nitriding, while using a plasma nitriding method, the nitrided oxide layer to provide a twice nitrided oxide layer having a second

nitrogen gradient that peaks at the exposed surface of the twice nitrided oxide layer. The method also includes laminating a surface semiconductor layer upon an exposed surface of the twice nitrided oxide layer.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The objects, features, and advantages of the invention will become more apparent upon consideration of the following detailed description, which is read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIG. 1 shows a schematic cross-sectional diagram of a conventional semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure, illustrating mobile dopant (e.g., boron) migration and segregation from a base semiconductor substrate and a surface semiconductor layer into a buried oxide (BOX) layer within the conventional semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure.

FIG. 2 shows a schematic cross-sectional diagram of a pMOSFET fabricated on a thin semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) substrate illustrating mobile dopant (e.g., boron) migration and segregation from extension regions into a buried oxide (BOX) layer.

FIG. 3 shows a schematic cross-sectional diagram of an embodiment of a semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure of the invention incorporating tailored gradient nitrogen dopant concentrations at interfaces of a buried oxide (BOX) layer with a base semiconductor substrate and a surface semiconductor layer.

FIGS. 4A-4F show a series of schematic cross-sectional diagrams illustrating the results of progressive stages in fabricating a semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure in accordance with an embodiment of the invention.

FIGS. 5A and 5B show a pair of schematic cross-sectional diagrams illustrating the results of progressive stages in fabricating a semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure in accordance with an additional embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 6 and FIG. 7 show a pair of schematic cross-sectional diagrams of a metal oxide semiconductor field effect transistor (MOSFET) located within separate semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structures in accordance with the embodiments of the invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The invention includes semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structures and methods for fabricating the semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structures. The semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structures include nitrogen incorporated as a gradient within a buried oxide (BOX) layer. A nitrogen gradient profile within the buried oxide (BOX) layer is optimized to inhibit mobile dopant (i.e., boron) migration and segregation from both a base semiconductor substrate and a surface semiconductor layer adjoining portions of the buried oxide (BOX) layer within the semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structures.

The structures and methods of the embodiments are described in further detail below, and understood within the context of the drawings described above. Since the drawings described above are intended for illustrative purposes only, the drawings are not necessarily drawn to scale.

FIG. 1 shows a schematic cross-sectional diagram of a semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure in accordance with the prior art. The semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure comprises a base semiconductor substrate **30**. A buried oxide (BOX) layer **20** is located upon the base semiconductor substrate **30**. A surface semiconductor layer **10** is located upon the buried oxide (BOX) layer **20**.

FIG. 1 also shows mobile dopant (e.g., boron) atoms **40** that preferentially migrate and segregate into the buried oxide (BOX) layer **20** from the base semiconductor substrate **30** and the surface semiconductor layer **10** during a generally high temperature (i.e., from about 800° to about 1200° C.) processing step.

FIG. 2 shows a schematic cross-sectional diagram of a MOSFET, i.e., transistor T, (generally a p-MOSFET) fabricated on a comparatively thin semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure (i.e., the surface semiconductor layer **10** has a thickness from about 30 to about 350 angstroms). The transistor T comprises a gate dielectric **51** located upon the surface semiconductor layer **10**. A gate electrode **52** is located aligned upon the gate dielectric **51**, although such alignment is not a limitation of the prior art. A pair of spacers **53** (illustrated in cross-section, but intended as representative of a single spacer surrounding the gate electrode **52** in plan-view) adjoin opposite sidewalls of the gate electrode **52** and the gate dielectric **51**. Finally, a pair of source/drain regions **54** is located within the surface semiconductor layer **10** and separated by a channel region aligned beneath the gate electrode **52**.

FIG. 2 also illustrates migration and segregation of the mobile dopant atoms **40** into the buried oxide (BOX) layer **20** from: (1) a pair of extension region portions **55** of the source/drain regions **54** (i.e., portions of the source/drain region **54** beneath the spacers **53**); and (2) the base semiconductor substrate **30**. The mobile dopant atoms **40** migration and segregation from the extension region portions **55** of the source/drain region **54** into the buried oxide (BOX) layer **20** is exacerbated in a comparatively thin surface semiconductor layer **10** (i.e., surface semiconductor layer thickness less than about 350 angstroms) when the extension region portions **55** of the source/drain regions **54** abut the buried oxide (BOX) layer **20**.

FIG. 3 shows a schematic cross-sectional diagram of an enhanced semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure in accordance with the invention. The enhanced semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure includes a nitrogen gradient within the buried oxide (BOX) layer **20**. The nitrogen gradient comprises: (1) a first region of high nitrogen concentration **60** within the buried oxide (BOX) layer **20** adjoining an interface of the semiconductor surface layer **10** and the buried oxide (BOX) layer **20**; and (2) a second region of high nitrogen concentration **70** within the buried oxide (BOX) layer **20** adjoining an interface of the base semiconductor substrate **30** and the buried oxide (BOX) layer **20**.

Each of the first region of high nitrogen concentration **60** and the second region of high nitrogen concentration **70** comprises a nitrogen concentration from about 0.1 to about 10 atomic percent with respect to an aggregate of silicon atomic concentration and oxygen atomic concentration (i.e., a silicon:oxygen:nitrogen atomic ratio for the first region of high nitrogen concentration **60** and the second region of high nitrogen concentration **70** is from about 30:60:10 to about 333:666:1. A region of the buried oxide (BOX) layer **20** interposed between the first region of high nitrogen concentration of **60** and the second region of high nitrogen concentration **70** has a nitrogen concentration less than about 0.1 atomic percent. The nitrogen gradient is typically continuous, with maximum nitrogen concentrations within the buried oxide (BOX) layer **20** at the interfaces thereof with the surface semiconductor layer **10** and the base semiconductor substrate **30**.

The embodiments that follow describe methods for fabricating a semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure generally in accordance with the semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure whose schematic cross-sectional diagram is illustrated in FIG. 3.

FIG. 4A to FIG. 4F show a series of schematic cross-sectional diagrams illustrating the results of progressive stages in fabricating a semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure in accordance with an embodiment of the invention. This embodiment of the invention comprises a first embodi-

ment of the invention. FIG. 4A shows a semiconductor substrate **80**. A buried oxide (BOX) layer **90** is located upon the semiconductor substrate **80**.

The semiconductor substrate **80** may comprise any of several semiconductor materials. Non-limiting examples include silicon, germanium, silicon-germanium alloy, silicon carbide, silicon-germanium carbide alloy and compound semiconductor materials. Non-limiting examples of compound semiconductor materials include gallium arsenide, indium arsenide and indium phosphide semiconductor materials. Typically, the semiconductor substrate **80** comprises a silicon or silicon-germanium alloy semiconductor material that has a thickness from about 1 to about 3 mm.

The buried oxide (BOX) layer **90** comprises an oxide dielectric material. The oxide dielectric material may comprise an oxide of an element such as silicon or germanium. Silicon oxide is a common oxide material. Other oxide materials are not excluded. The oxide dielectric material may be formed using any of several methods. Layer transfer methods and laminating methods are common. Also contemplated are deposition methods, such as chemical vapor deposition methods and physical vapor deposition methods. Neither the instant embodiment, nor the invention, uses a separation by implantation of oxygen (SIMOX) method for forming the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90**, since an interface of a semiconductor substrate and a buried oxide (BOX) layer formed using a separation by implantation of oxygen (SIMOX) method is often imprecisely defined and has a relatively high concentration of fixed charge which is undesirable. Typically, the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90** comprises a silicon oxide material that has a thickness from about 200 to about 1000 angstroms.

FIG. 4B shows the results of nitriding the buried oxide (BOX) layer **80** to form a first nitrogen gradient **100** within a resulting buried oxide (BOX) layer **90'** near an interface of the semiconductor substrate **80** and the resulting buried oxide (BOX) layer **90'**. The first nitrogen gradient **100** is formed using a thermal nitridation method. Other methods are not excluded, provided that the other methods form a first nitrogen gradient (similar to the first nitrogen gradient **100**) within the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90'** near an interface of the semiconductor substrate **80** and the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90'**.

The thermal nitridation method allows for diffusion of a nitriding material through the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90** to the interface thereof with the semiconductor substrate **80** when forming the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90'**. The thermal nitridation method uses a nitriding material that may be selected from the group consisting of at least nitrogen, nitrous oxide and nitric oxide nitriding materials. Typically, a thermal nitriding method in accordance with the instant embodiment uses a semiconductor substrate **80** and a buried oxide (BOX) layer **90** temperature from about 500° to about 1350° degrees centigrade. Typically, the first nitrogen gradient **100** has a thickness from about 20 to about 1000 angstroms within the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90'** adjoining the interface thereof with the semiconductor substrate **80**. As disclosed above, the first nitrogen gradient **100** has a nitrogen content from about 0.1 to about 10 atomic percent within the buried oxide (BOX)

layer **90'** (i.e., silicon:oxygen:nitrogen atomic ratio within the first nitrogen gradient **100** is from about 333:666:1 to about 30:60:10).

FIG. 4C shows the results of further nitriding of the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90'** to form a second nitrogen gradient **110** at the surface of a buried oxide (BOX) layer **90''**. The further nitriding that provides the second nitrogen gradient **110** within the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90''** is effected using a plasma nitriding method that is effectively a surface nitriding method and not a diffusional nitriding method. The plasma nitriding method may use the same nitriding materials as the thermal nitriding method disclosed above for forming the first nitrogen gradient **100** within the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90'**. The plasma nitriding method may use generally conventional plasma nitriding conditions, which may be selectively varied within conventional limitations, provided that the dimensions and the concentrations within the second nitrogen gradient are in accordance with the limitations described below.

Similarly with the first nitrogen gradient **100**, the second nitrogen gradient **110** typically also has a depth within the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90''** from about 20 to about 1000 angstroms. The second nitrogen gradient **110** typically also has a silicon:oxygen:nitrogen atomic ratio in a range analogous to the range of the same parameter for the first nitrogen gradient **100**.

FIG. 4D shows the results of implanting hydrogen ions (with an implant dose from about 5e14 to about 5e16 hydrogen ions per square centimeter) into the semiconductor substrate **80** to form a fracture plane **120** within the semiconductor substrate **80**. The fracture plane **120** is intended to be located so as to leave a thickness from about 50 to about 2000 angstroms of the semiconductor substrate **80** to the first nitrogen gradient **100** within the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90''**. The energy of the hydrogen implant is adjusted based on the position of the fracture plane **120**. Alternatively to using the fracture plane **120**, other methods for eventually cleaving the semiconductor substrate **80**, or alternatively simply thinning the semiconductor substrate **80**, may also be used.

FIG. 4E shows a second semiconductor substrate **130** located upon and laminated to the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90''**. The second semiconductor substrate **130** may comprise a semiconductor material selected from the same group of semiconductor materials as the semiconductor substrate **80**. The semiconductor substrate **80** and the second semiconductor substrate **130** may comprise the same semiconductor material or a different semiconductor material may be used. In addition, the semiconductor substrate **80** and the second semiconductor substrate **130** may have the same or different dopant polarities, dopant concentrations and crystallographic orientations. Typically, the second semiconductor substrate **130** comprises a silicon or silicon-germanium alloy semiconductor material that need not necessarily have the same dopant polarity, dopant concentration and crystallographic orientation as the semiconductor substrate **80**.

FIG. 4F first shows the results of inverting the semiconductor structure of FIG. 4E.

FIG. 4F also shows the results of cleaving the semiconductor substrate **80** along the fracture plane **120** illustrated in FIG. 4D and FIG. 4E to form therefrom a surface semiconductor layer **140** within a semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure. The semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure comprises the second semiconductor substrate **130** that serves as a base semiconductor substrate. The buried dielectric layer **90''** is located upon the second semiconductor substrate **130** wherein the second nitrogen gradient **110** adjoins the second semiconductor substrate **130**. The surface semi-

conductor layer **140** is located upon the buried oxide layer **90''**, wherein the first nitrogen gradient **100** adjoins the surface semiconductor layer **140**.

Cleavage of the semiconductor substrate **80** along the fracture plane **120** that is illustrated in FIG. **4D** and FIG. **4E** to provide the surface semiconductor layer **140** may be effected using any of several methods that are conventional in the semiconductor fabrication art. Thermally assisted cleavage methods and mechanically assisted cleavage methods are common. Mechanically assisted cleavage methods are typical. As is noted above, alternative thinning methods to cleavage methods may also be used for forming the surface semiconductor layer **140** from the semiconductor substrate **80**. Such alternative thinning methods may include, but are not limited to chemical etch thinning methods, mechanical polish thinning methods and chemical mechanical polish thinning methods.

FIG. **4F** shows a semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure fabricated in accordance with an embodiment of the invention that comprises a first embodiment of the invention. The semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure comprises a second semiconductor substrate **130** that comprises a base semiconductor substrate. A buried oxide (BOX) layer **90''** is laminated and located upon the second semiconductor substrate **130**. A surface semiconductor layer **140** is laminated and located upon the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90''**. The buried oxide (BOX) layer **90''** comprises a second nitrogen gradient **110** located within a portion of the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90''** that adjoins the second semiconductor substrate **130**. The buried oxide (BOX) layer **90''** also comprises a first nitrogen gradient **100** located within a portion of the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90''** that adjoins the surface semiconductor layer **140**. The first nitrogen gradient **100** and the second nitrogen gradient **110** inhibit mobile dopant (i.e., typically boron) migration from either the surface semiconductor layer **140** or the second semiconductor substrate **130** and segregation thereof into the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90''**.

The semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure in accordance with the first embodiment as illustrated in FIG. **4F** has abrupt and sharply defined interfaces of the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90''** with the second semiconductor substrate **130** and the surface semiconductor layer **140**. The abrupt and sharply defined interfaces result from the use of a deposition method, a laminating method or a layer transfer method when fabricating the semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure. Either of the foregoing two abrupt and sharply defined interfaces of the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90''** with the second semiconductor substrate **130** and the surface semiconductor layer **140** typically has: (1) an interfacial roughness of less than about 10 angstroms RMS (where RMS is root mean square, and intended to be calculated as a square root of a sum of squares of individual deviations from a mean value of a location of the interface of the buried oxide layer **90''** with either of the surface semiconductor layer **140** or the second semiconductor substrate **130**); and (2) a transition from the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90''** to either the second semiconductor substrate **130** or surface semiconductor layer **140** within less than about five atomic layers. Atomic layer transitions may be readily discerned using a cross-sectional image taken using a transmission electron microscope (TEM).

For comparison purposes, a semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure that is formed using a separation by implantation of oxygen (SIMOX) method is unlikely to achieve the foregoing interfacial roughness limitations or atomic layer transition limitations. When using a separation by implantation of oxygen (SIMOX) method for forming a semiconduc-

tor-on-insulator (SOI) structure related to the semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure that is illustrated in FIG. **4F**, an interfacial roughness between a buried oxide (BOX) layer and a surface semiconductor layer or a base semiconductor substrate will typically be greater than 10 angstroms RMS (i.e., root mean square). Similarly, transition from the buried oxide (BOX) layer to the surface semiconductor layer or the base semiconductor substrate for a semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure fabricated using a separation by implantation of oxygen (SIMOX) method typically requires greater than 5 atomic layers. The oxide/Si interface in a SIMOX wafer also typically has higher fixed charge than the oxide/Si interface in an SOI substrate formed by lamination or wafer bonding.

FIG. **5A** and FIG. **5B** show a pair of schematic cross-sectional diagrams illustrating the results of progressive stages in fabricating a semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure in accordance with another embodiment of the invention. This other embodiment of the invention comprises a second embodiment of the invention.

FIG. **5A** shows a schematic cross-sectional diagram of a semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure generally related to the first embodiment. The semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure in accordance with the second embodiment results from further processing of the semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure of FIG. **4C** within the first embodiment.

The semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure of the second embodiment that is illustrated in FIG. **5A** comprises, in a first instance, the semiconductor substrate **80** that comprises a base semiconductor substrate. The buried oxide (BOX) layer **90''** further comprising the first nitrogen gradient **100** and the second nitrogen gradient **110** is located upon the semiconductor substrate **80**. The first nitrogen gradient **100** within the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90''** contacts the semiconductor substrate **80**. The foregoing layers and structures may comprise materials, have dimensions and be formed using methods analogous, equivalent or identical to the materials, dimensions and methods used for forming the like designated layers and structures that are illustrated in FIG. **4C**.

The second embodiment also comprises: (1) a second buried oxide (BOX) layer **145** located upon the buried oxide layer **90''** and contacting the second nitrogen gradient **110**; and (2) a second semiconductor substrate **160** located upon the second buried oxide layer **145**. The second semiconductor substrate **160** further comprises a fracture plane **150** that results from hydrogen ion implantation. Thus, within the second embodiment, the buried oxide layer **90''** has an abrupt interface with the second buried oxide layer **145** rather than a surface semiconductor layer derived from the second semiconductor substrate **160** subsequent to cleavage of the second semiconductor substrate **160** at the fracture plane **150**.

The second buried oxide (BOX) layer **145** may comprise materials and be formed using methods analogous, equivalent or identical to the materials and methods used for forming the buried oxide layer **80** that is illustrated in FIG. **4A** (i.e., prior to nitridation thereof to form the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90''** or **90''**). Thus, the second buried oxide (BOX) layer **145** will typically comprise an oxide comprising silicon and/or germanium, but absent nitrogen. Oxides of other elements are not excluded. Typically, the second buried oxide (BOX) layer **145** has a thickness from about 5 to about 100 angstroms.

The second semiconductor substrate **160** comprising the fracture plane **150** is otherwise analogous to the semiconductor substrate **80** comprising the fracture plane **120** that is illustrated within FIG. **4E**. The second semiconductor substrate **160** comprising the fracture plane **150** may be formed

using methods analogous, equivalent or identical to the methods used for forming the semiconductor substrate **120** comprising the fracture plane **80** within the first embodiment.

FIG. **5B** shows the results of cleaving the semiconductor substrate **160** along the fracture plane **150** that is illustrated in FIG. **5A** to form a surface semiconductor layer **170** within a semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure in accordance with the second embodiment of the invention.

The semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure in accordance with the second embodiment thus comprises a semiconductor substrate **80** that comprises a base semiconductor substrate. A buried oxide (BOX) layer **90"** is located upon the semiconductor substrate **80**. The buried oxide (BOX) layer **90"** comprises a first nitrogen gradient **100** including a region that contacts the semiconductor substrate **80** and a second nitrogen gradient **110** at an opposite region thereof. A second buried oxide (BOX) layer **145** contacts the second nitrogen gradient **110** within the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90"**. A surface semiconductor layer **170** contacts the second buried oxide (BOX) layer **145**.

Within the second embodiment, the first nitrogen gradient **100** and the second nitrogen gradient **110** provide the same mobile dopant (i.e., typically boron) migration and segregation inhibition that is discussed above within the context of the first embodiment.

FIG. **6** shows a field effect transistor T' located within the surface semiconductor layer **140** of the semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure of FIG. **4F**. The field effect transistor T' comprises a gate dielectric **200** located upon the surface semiconductor layer **140**. A gate electrode **210** is located upon the gate dielectric **200**. A plurality of spacer layers **220** is located adjoining sidewalls of the gate **210** and gate dielectric **200**. A pair of source/drain regions **230** is located within the surface semiconductor layer **140** and separated by a channel region located beneath the gate electrode **210**. Extension region portions **250** of the source/drain regions **230** are located beneath the spacer layers **220**.

Each of the foregoing layers and structures that comprise the field effect transistor T' may comprise materials, have dimensions and be formed using methods that are generally conventional in the semiconductor fabrication art.

The gate dielectric **200** may comprise a generally conventional gate dielectric material such as an oxide, nitride or oxynitride of silicon having a dielectric constant from about 4 to about 20, measured in vacuum. Oxides, nitrides and oxynitrides of other elements that are in the same dielectric constant range are not excluded. The gate dielectric **200** may also comprise a generally higher dielectric constant gate dielectric material having a dielectric constant from about 20 to at least about 100, also measured in vacuum. Examples of such generally higher dielectric constant gate dielectric materials include, but are not limited to: hafnium oxides, hafnium silicates, tantalum oxides, titanium oxides, lanthanum oxides, barium-strontium titanates (BSTs) and lead-zirconate titanates (PZTs).

The foregoing gate dielectric materials may be deposited using any of several methods that are appropriate to their materials of composition, and are otherwise conventional in the semiconductor fabrication art. Non-limiting examples of methods include chemical vapor deposition methods (including atomic layer chemical vapor deposition methods) and physical vapor deposition methods (including sputtering methods).

The gate electrode **210** may similarly comprise any of several gate electrode conductor materials. Non-limiting examples include certain metals, metal alloys, metal silicides and metal nitrides. Also included are doped polysilicon (i.e.,

having a dopant concentration from about $1e18$ to about $1e22$ dopant atoms per cubic centimeter) gate electrode materials and polycide (doped polysilicon/metal silicide stack) gate electrode materials.

The gate electrode conductor materials may also be formed using any of several methods that are appropriate to their materials of composition. Non-limiting examples include plating methods, chemical vapor deposition methods and physical vapor deposition methods.

The spacers **220** typically comprise a dielectric spacer material, although spacers comprising conductor spacer materials are also known in the semiconductor fabrication art. The spacers **220** may alternatively comprise a laminate or composite of dielectric materials and/or conductor materials. The spacers **220** are typically formed using a blanket layer deposition and anisotropic etch back method that provides the spacers **220** with the characteristically inward pointed shape.

The source/drain regions **230** are typically formed using a two step ion implantation method that uses the gate electrode **210**, alternatively with and without the spacers **220**, as a mask. A first step within the two step ion implantation method uses the gate electrode **210** absent the spacers **220** as a mask and forms extension region portions **250** of the source/drain regions **230** into the surface semiconductor layer **140**. A second step within the two step ion implantation method uses the gate electrode **210** and the spacers **220** as a mask to form conductor region portions of the source/drain regions **230** into the surface semiconductor layer **140**.

As is illustrated within FIG. **6**, the second semiconductor substrate **130** and the extension region portions **250** of the source/drain region **230** may comprise mobile dopants **40** (i.e., typically boron mobile dopants). The mobile dopants **40** are immobilized with respect to migration and segregation into the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90"** due to the presence of the first nitrogen gradient **100** and the second nitrogen gradient **110**.

FIG. **6** shows a schematic cross-sectional diagram of a field effect transistor structure T' located within a semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure in accordance with the first embodiment of the invention as illustrated in FIG. **4F**. The field effect transistor structure T' comprises a quantity of mobile dopants **40** within both: (1) the second semiconductor substrate **130** that comprises a base semiconductor substrate; and (2) the surface semiconductor layer **140**. The mobile dopants **40** migration and segregation into the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90"** is impeded by the presence of the first nitrogen gradient **110** within the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90"** adjoining the surface semiconductor layer **140** and the second nitrogen gradient **100** within the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90"** adjoining the second semiconductor substrate **130**.

FIG. **7** shows a schematic cross-sectional diagram of a field effect transistor T' located within a semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure in accordance with the second embodiment of the invention as illustrated in FIG. **5B**.

FIG. **7** is largely analogous to FIG. **6**, but differs with respect to: (1) presence of the semiconductor substrate **80** as a base semiconductor substrate rather than the second semiconductor substrate **130** as the base semiconductor substrate; (2) an inversion of the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90"**; (3) incorporation of the second buried oxide (BOX) layer **145**; and (4) presence of the surface semiconductor layer **170** in place of the surface semiconductor layer **140**.

Within the schematic diagram of FIG. **7**, the mobile dopants **40** within the transistor T' are still immobilized by the second nitrogen gradient **110** from migration into the buried oxide (BOX) layer **90"**, but mobile dopants **40** may migrate and segregate into the second buried oxide (BOX) layer **145**

that does not include a nitrogen gradient. The semiconductor structure that is illustrated in FIG. 7 results in significantly higher FET drive current (and hence improved circuit performance) due to reduced device parasitic resistance in the extension and source/drain regions.

Described and illustrated within the context of the foregoing embodiments are structures and methods for minimizing mobile dopant (i.e., boron) migration and segregation from a surface semiconductor layer and a base semiconductor substrate in to a buried oxide (BOX) layer within a semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure. Inhibition of such mobile dopant migration and segregation enables the fabrication of low extension sheet resistance pMOSFETs within comparatively thin surface semiconductor layers (i.e., less than about 350 angstroms) within semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structures. Thus, higher performance devices, such as in particular pMOSFET devices, are enabled by the foregoing embodiments. Preventing mobile dopant migration and segregation into a buried oxide (BOX) layer within a semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) structure is also beneficial for fully-depleted semiconductor-on-insulator (SOI) based devices where a surface semiconductor layer doping is used as a back gate and used to set a threshold voltage.

It should be noted that although the drawings and description provided above show nitrogen gradients at the interface between both of the base semiconductor layer and the surface semiconductor layer, the present invention is not so limited. For example, the nitrogen gradient can be located at only the interface between the base semiconductor layer or the interface between the surface semiconductor layer.

The preferred embodiments of the invention are illustrative of the invention rather than limiting of the invention. Revisions and modifications may be made to methods, materials structures and dimensions of a semiconductor structure in accordance with the preferred embodiments of the invention while still providing a semiconductor structure in accordance with the invention, further in accordance with the accompanying claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for fabricating a semiconductor structure comprising:

nitriding, while using a thermal nitriding method, an oxide layer located upon a base semiconductor substrate to provide a nitrided oxide layer having a first nitrogen gradient that peaks at an interface of the nitrided oxide layer with the base semiconductor substrate;

nitriding, while using a plasma nitriding method, the nitrided oxide layer to provide a twice nitrided oxide layer having a second nitrogen gradient that peaks at the exposed surface of the twice nitrided oxide layer;

laminating a surface semiconductor layer upon the twice nitrided oxide layer to contact the second nitrogen gradient; and

forming at least one transistor upon and in said surface semiconductor layer, wherein said forming the at least one transistor comprises forming a gate material stack on the surface semiconductor layer, and forming a source region and a drain region within the surface semiconductor layer at a footprint of the gate material stack, wherein a channel region is interposed between the source region and the drain region, and said channel region is located directly beneath the gate material stack.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the thermal nitriding method uses a nitriding material selected from the group consisting of a nitrogen nitriding material, a nitric oxide nitriding material and a nitrous oxide nitriding material.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the thermal nitriding method uses a thermal diffusion temperature from about 500 to about 1350 degrees centigrade.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the plasma nitriding method uses a nitriding material selected from the group consisting of a nitrogen nitriding material, a nitric oxide nitriding material and a nitrous oxide nitriding material.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein each of the first nitrogen gradient and the second nitrogen gradient has a depth from about 20 to about 1000 angstroms within the twice nitrided oxide layer.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the buried dielectric layer has an abrupt interface with the at least one of the base semiconductor substrate and the surface semiconductor layer that transitions to the at least one of the base semiconductor substrate and the surface semiconductor layer in less than about five atomic layers.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein the buried dielectric layer has the abrupt interface with the surface semiconductor layer.

8. The method of claim 6 wherein the buried dielectric layer has the abrupt interface with both the base semiconductor substrate and the surface semiconductor layer.

9. The method of claim 6 wherein the abrupt interface has an interfacial roughness of less than about 10 angstroms RMS.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein the buried dielectric layer comprises the interfacial roughness of less than about 10 angstroms RMS with the surface semiconductor layer.

11. The method of claim 9 wherein the buried dielectric layer comprises the interfacial roughness of less than about 10 angstroms RMS with both the base semiconductor substrate and the surface semiconductor layer.

12. The method of claim 6 wherein the oxide layer comprises silicon oxide.

13. The method of claim 6 wherein said oxide layer comprises germanium oxide.

14. The method of claim 1 further comprising forming another oxide layer atop the twice nitrided oxide layer prior to laminating the surface semiconductor layer thereon.

15. The method of claim 1 wherein said forming the at least one transistor further comprises forming at least one spacer on a sidewall of said gate material stack prior to forming the source and drain regions.

16. A method comprising:

nitriding, while using a thermal nitriding method, an oxide layer located upon a base semiconductor substrate to provide a nitrided oxide layer having a first nitrogen gradient that peaks at an interface of the nitrided oxide layer with the base semiconductor substrate;

nitriding, while using a plasma nitriding method, the nitrided oxide layer to provide a twice nitrided oxide layer having a second nitrogen gradient that peaks at the exposed surface of the twice nitrided oxide layer; and

laminating a surface semiconductor layer upon the twice nitrided oxide layer to contact the second nitrogen gradient, wherein said method forms a semiconductor-on-insulator layer comprising a buried dielectric layer located interposed between a base semiconductor substrate and a surface semiconductor layer, the buried dielectric layer comprising an oxide material including a nitrogen gradient therein that increases at the interface of the buried dielectric layer with at least one of the base semiconductor substrate and the surface semiconductor layer, the buried dielectric layer comprising an abrupt interface with the at least one of the base semiconductor substrate and surface semiconductor layer that transi-

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tions to the at least one of the base semiconductor substrate and the surface semiconductor layer in less than about five atomic layers.

17. A method comprising:

nitriding, while using a thermal nitriding method, an oxide 5
layer located upon a base semiconductor substrate to provide a nitrided oxide layer having a first nitrogen gradient that peaks at an interface of the nitrided oxide layer with the base semiconductor substrate;

nitriding, while using a plasma nitriding method, the 10
nitrided oxide layer to provide a twice nitrided oxide layer having a second nitrogen gradient that peaks at the exposed surface of the twice nitrided oxide layer; and
laminating a surface semiconductor layer upon the twice
nitrided oxide layer to contact the second nitrogen gra-

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dient, wherein said method forms a semiconductor-on-insulator layer comprising a buried dielectric layer located interposed between a base semiconductor substrate and a surface semiconductor layer, the buried dielectric layer comprising an oxide material including a nitrogen gradient therein that increases at an abrupt interface of the buried dielectric layer with at least one of the base semiconductor substrate and the surface semiconductor layer, the buried dielectric layer comprising an interfacial roughness with the at least one of the base semiconductor substrate and surface semiconductor layer of less than about 10 angstroms RMS.

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